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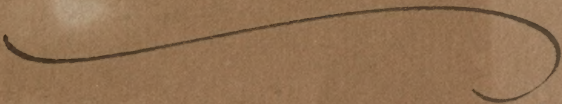
Alpha Centauri

BY
M. FORREST

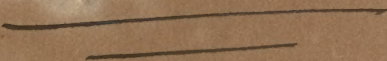
T. C. LOTHIAN



Mrs J. H. Halsey
With The
Authors' Up and



Feb 2nd 1911





ALPHA CENTAURI

ALPHA CENTAURI

Alpha Centauri



Mabel (Mills)
BY
M. FORREST
//



Melbourne:

THOMAS C. LOTHIAN, 226 Little Collins Street

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1909

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DEDICATION



TO PEGGY.

Unseeing eyes! You cannot scan the leaf,
Oh, silent lips; you cannot blame or praise,
But, to the memory of those glad past days,
Before our laughter was gripped close by grief,
I dedicate the dream all unfulfilled,

Because of all the help your counsel gave,
I lay upon a heart whose pulse is stilled,
Flower and thorn above my dear one's grave.

AUTHOR'S NOTE



Of the verses here collected, the following appeared in the "Australasian":—"A Song of Blue Skies," "Call of the North," "The Lighted Room," "Peace and War," "The Outlaw," "The Locked Door," "Finale," "No Record," "Moon Tryst," and "Boy Dreams."

The Sydney "Bulletin" originally printed—

"In the Church," "The Deserted Beach," "The Other Side," "Fettered," "The Circus Lion," "The Girl in Yellow," "An Old Woman," "A Still Night," "The Honey Moon," "Ready Mades," "The Poster Girl," "The Pan-theist," "The New Fence," "The Sage."

"The Valley of Lagoons" won the first prize at the Maryborough Eisteddfod in 1907. "The Land of the Sun" took first prize at the Toowoomba Austral, 1906. "The Native Born" obtained first prize in the verse competition at Toowoomba Eisteddfod, 1907, and was subsequently printed in "The Spectator," London. "Australia Undefended" and "Fever" were published in "The Sunday Times," Sydney.

"The Corner Shop" appeared in "The Woman's Budget," and "The Outpost" in "Life."

From the Editor of the "Pall Mall Magazine" I obtain permission to reprint "The Big 'Roos' Feeding Ground," and "Creeks Out West."

"The Sydney Mail" published "The Telegram," and "Peggy's Eyes." And in Steele Rudd's Magazine appeared "I Remember."

In "The London Magazine," "I Remember," and "A Lighted Room" were also printed.

The Editors of "The Lone Hand" kindly allow me to publish "Chaperones;" and "The Lonely Woman" appeared in "The British Australasian."

To the Editors of these magazines I am indebted for their courteous permission to reprint my work in book form.

M. FORREST.

Brisbane, Queensland, 1909.

INTRODUCTION



ALPHA CENTAURI.

Alpha Centauri, the double star, is the chief pointer to the Southern Cross. Alpha is the finer of the two stars, the components being of nearly the same size, and so far apart that they can be seen through a good telescope.

It glows above our mighty sea-laved isle,
Changing and flick'ring in the arch of God,
Where miles and miles of grassy levels smile,
And where the unsung pioneers have trod.
Alpha Centauri! See the double star
That gleams as one above the smoke-drift cloud,
Above the groves of Redwood and Bethar,
Or where the checked Pacific thunders loud.
Star of my home! When I was but a child,
Watching, and fearful of the coming years,
You bade me learn the story of the wild,
You bade me sing it low to stranger ears!

* * * *

The star is dim, I bring to thee to-day
The star of poesy that fails to shine,

With all the warmth I meant to lend the ray,
To light the pathways of this isle of mine.
But come to me, oh! my Beloved, and look,
Another star I shelter in my hand;
Shut close between the pages of my book,
The Star of Love a woman bears her land!

M. FORREST.

Queensland, 1909.

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Alpha Centauri

THE VALLEY OF LAGOONS.

"I have dreamed of it at dawn," she said, "and under
the great white moons;
I have thought of it at dusk," she said, "and longed
in the summer noons,
To find the path by the sandstone ridge, and over
the granite hill,
By the ring-barked plain and the quaking swamp,
where the pools lie deep and still—"
Then, "Oh, come away with me," she said, "to the
Valley of Lagoons!
We will ride on past the cockies' homes, and the
gold green of the corn,
And the blue-green of the lucerne patch, where the
daisies white are born.
We will pass the curve of the chock-and-log, and
set the slip-rails wide,
Where the moss is deep on the unused road, to-
gether we shall ride;
And over the sweep of the prairie grass, and on to
the yellow plain,
And up by the dreary spinifex, and out to the five-
mile lane,

Past the hut where the shepherd died, who tired of
God's bright sun,
The rotting beam where his body swayed, when
the shameful deed was done,
And past the black mark of the tree that was left
by the ninety flood,
And past the wreck of the cockies' fence, sunk deep
in the river mud;
And down by the children's bogey-hole, and over
the shallow creek,
Thro' the gate of the boundary fence, where they
trapped the dog last week.
The sun will squander upon us both the wealth of
his lavish noons,
Till we find the road—so few have found—to the
Valley of Lagoons!"

"And when we find the Valley," I said, "with its
sheeted silver tides,
Say, what is the boon that you will grant to the
one who faithful rides,
Thro' stifling scrub, and o'er rutted plain, and by
ridge and road and creek?
Say, what shall I gain, who go far afield that un-
known way to seek?"

She leaned across, and she laid her hand on my
horse's jetty mane,
"What is a fairer thing," asked she, "than the pic-
ture of scrub and plain?
What could you crave beyond our land, with the
flower-sweet afternoons,
And the wonder that the good God sets in the
Valley of Lagoons?"

"The red of dawns that burn in the East, and the
gold of suns that rise,
Are nothing at all to me," I said, "compared to a
woman's eyes,

And the white of clouds that were piled last eve
like snow in the twilit west,

Are not as fair as the milky curves that make up a
woman's breast;

The blue that arches the heaven above, and the
crescent moon that dips,

Is not as dear as a woman's heart, nor loved like a
woman's lips!"

Slow to her cheek the maid-red rose, and slow to
her mouth a smile,

"God spread the beauties of earth," she said, "for
many a sun-kissed mile;

But a woman! a year or two of charm, then grey
hairs and the grave."

I answered, "But the woman for me, for that is
the thing I crave!"

She rode a sleek brown station hack, with a bur-
.....nished shoulder and side,

A great black horse from the Wilga breed, was the
one I picked to ride;

They paced together with jangling bits, and my
heart sang reckless tunes,

As we rode out of the station street to the Valley
of Lagoons.

'Twas morn when we set the slip rails down, and
rode through the dew-wet herbs,

And on the hurrying steeds of thought I set no gall-
ing curbs.

I thought of all that a man might think, and all that
a girl might say,
All that my heart might chance to lose at the end
of the ride to-day;
Across the road, from tree to tree, where the slim
gum branches swung,
The thick gold cord of a spider web from each
polished bough was hung,
The scent of gum leaves was in the air, and ever
again we heard
The deep wild note of a joy gone mad in some
unseen butcher-bird.
A swallow darted across the track, and, the soft
green suckers through,
We heard the thud of a scattered mob of the swift
red kangaroo;
And in the paddock the big brood mare was win-
neying to her foal,
And the 'possum fled, with upraised tail, to his
cunning hiding hole;
And gay little wrens, with a flash of blue, hopped
away from the horses' hoofs,
As we left behind the woolshed gates, and the glint
of the iron roofs.
'Twas noon when we found the secret path that
led up the granite hill,
And saw the hue of a fallen sky 'twixt the grey
rocks smooth and still,
And heard the rustle of wooing wind that rippled
the shimm'ring tide,
And the weird whisperings of the reeds where the
breeding black duck hide.

We saw the water lilies, pink as the blush of a
bride divine,

She turned to me with a sudden cry, and nestled
her hand in mine.

Lovers who sigh for a dimpled chin, the lure of a
maiden's eyes,

Take horse, and ride with her by your side, if you
are as lovers wise;

Till you find the place of the dream fulfilled—
sought thro' so many moons,

For this is the home of peerless dawns, and rap-
turous afternoons.

Ride forth at morn by the scrub and ridge, and up
by the granite hill,

By the ring-barked plain, and quaking swamp,
where the pools lie deep and still,

And find the way—that few find to-day—to the
Valley of Lagoons.

AUSTRALIA UNDEFENDED.

I.

The blue sea skirts her slim, sun-ambered feet,
Upon her mighty brow red gold is bound,
Upon her breast mimosa flowers press sweet,
And hills and forests lap her beauty round.

All day she lies and dreams; from sun to sun,
From moon to moon, she couches soft, secure,
And, as to catch grey eve the gold hours run,
She thinks her slumber can for aye endure—

Full happy dreams are hers, of prosp'rous days,
Fleece-heavy flocks upon a green-fed land,
Of settlers' homes that lie in golden haze,
Of brother toilers moving hand in hand.

Of scented nights, when by the woota grove
The mopoke breaks the silence with his call,
And, o'er the slip-rail, love lilts low to love,
And Peace has spread her white wings over all.

So, filleted with matrix, opal, pearl,
And zoned with shimm'ring belts of ocean green,
Where (true love gift to many a sun-browned girl),
Hangs, link on link, a chain of olivine.

She sleeps, and winds come up and fan her hair,
Between her fingers springs the waratah,
Her coverlet is twined with musk-buds rare,
And threaded leaves of redwood and belah.

All day the breeze sings to her maiden ears
A lullaby, like croon of scrub-hid doves,
And, rustling in the brig'low boughs she hears
The lusty bronze-wing boasting of his loves.

She sleeps—and shall we leave her to her dream?
The sun is very bright on hill and dale,
O'er vine-hung rocks the silver waters gleam,
And moss lies all untrodden in the vale.

II.

They left her, where the purple mountains loom
Untenanted, above the Northern seas,
Rimmed round by palm, or fir of tufted gloom,
Or the stiff shoots of dry pandanus trees,
Left her to rest in woodlands green and still.
The winds died down, and Nature seemed to wait,
And there was never watcher on the hill,
No guarding cannon at the Northern gate.

Only the silence of the great scrub heart,
Only the hush upon the great grey plain,
Where buttercups in sun-caught splendour start
Thro' the fine veil of February rain.

There came a muffled stirring in the East,
From rock to rock a stealthy creature stept,
Red war unleashed—a sullen, sateless beast,
To prey upon her beauty while she slept!

III.

Australians, will you leave your dear land, Maid
of the sun, and Queen of the blue seas,
To cringe 'neath an alien master's hand, to hug his
feet, or fawn about his knees?

And will you let his savage, reiving touch mar the
white beauty of your Southern maid,
For she has trusted long and overmuch, to rise up
shudd'ring, rifled, and afraid?

They murmur round the gates to East and West;
their footsteps echo in the halls of Strife,
With hov'ring hand above her perfect breast, with
sear of bullet, or red, sudden knife!

The smoke will rise o'er quiet settlers' homes, but
not the smoke of peaceful hearths afar,
But that which, smiting heaven's blueness comes,
the horrid following of a bloody war.

Shattered before the screaming shell will lie the city
buildings that you builded well,
And, lifting ever to the arching sky, will float the
echoes of the man-made Hell,

Clotted in the shrinking hearts of flowers, where,
thro' cool aisles the tender North wind grieves,
And Pomera its honey sweetness showers, men's
blood will filigree along the leaves.

IV.

Do you think that you could thole it, Australian
born and free,
Where the call of many rivers finds an echo in the
sea?

Do you think that you could bear to feel the chain
that girds you round?

'Midst the chitter of the bell-birds in your happy
hunting ground,

Will you die—or live to learn it, when the crucial
moment comes,

And the crook'd and yellow fingers curve on unde-
fended homes?

You might have the strength of Samson, be an
Anak in the field,

Be a reckless "Death or ~~of~~ Glory" boy, and scorn to
pause or yield,

But the stag before the hunter's spear—he either
sinks or runs,

And what help are brawny hands and bare—the
other has the guns!

Let every unit find his place, a part of one great
plan—

Australians must remember, 'tis the boy that makes
the man.
Take the brown-faced laddies as they play along the
street,
Let them listen to the rhythm of the steady march-
ing feet,
Teach the keen young eye to sight the gun, the keen
young hand to thrust,
Do not let the young glance waver, or the good steel
barrel rust;
Let them play the game like soldiers, let them scout
the lucerne field,
With the rifle at the shoulder, and their honour for
their shield;
Let the lassies bind a token in the sun-kissed moun-
tain glades,
For the bravery of laddies and the purity of maids!
Arm the empty North that drowns by its tide-
washed sandy slopes;
There is iron in the ranges, there is silver in the
stopes,
There is wealth undreamed—your birthright—in
your country's scattered parts,
There is grit and honest courage in your people's
loyal hearts.
Rouse them with your martial music, with your call
"To Arms! To Arms!"
From New England's cherry blossoms, to North
Queensland's feather palms,
Would the man who swings a leg across the sweat-
ing outlaw's back
Swerve aside before the Maxim that is mouthing in
the track?

The stuff is there—then train it—put the means
within the hand,

Fate has given you a treasure to be guarded in
your land!

Oh! the fair-maid country calls you, as she couches
in the sun,

That you keep her honour stainless with the power
of your gun!

THE BIG 'ROOS' FEEDING GROUND.

In the heart of the timbered country, where the
boles of the trees show white, ^{leaf}
Where long leaves flicker above the ~~grass~~ in the
hush of a moonless night,
Where the Vandyke grass grows rank and lush,
and the sweetest herbs are found,
Lies the ^{pleasant} grassy sweep of the promised land, and the
big 'roos'* feeding ground.

They steal thro' the red-gum ranges, and they fly
past the splitters' camp,
They spring down by the shallow crossing, and
they circle the quaking swamp.
And they stand for a moment, front paws raised,
bright brown eyes glancing round,
Then off again, with a thudding tail, go the 'roos
to their feeding ground.

And the men from the survey hear them, as they
beat past the low white tent,
And the pigeons wake in the iron bark, where the
great dark boughs are bent;
And ere the peak of the topmost hill, by the eye
of the dawn is found,
They will take their fill of the grass and shrub in
the big 'roos' feeding ground.

* 'Roos--Kangaroos.

IN THE CHURCH.

They sang of Death and Judgment in the church,
A narrow wooden structure by the sea,
While outside sunlight shimmered on the sands,
And little laughing waves made melody.

Thro' a wide-open window, one wild bee
Blundered against the cross of beaten brass,
Dizzy from digging in lantana blooms,
Or dazzling flights across the sun-warm grass.

They sang of an unreal, revengeful God,
That pain was best—to grieve was dutiful—
And all the while the little, laughing waves
Spoke of a world that Love made beautiful.

A SONG OF BLUE SKIES.

This is a song of blue skies,
And the far purple of hills,
Vales where the mist legion dies,
As the red-shafted sun wills;
Plains where the vinca is spread,
Brown of the nuts on the palm,
Roof all unshadowed o'erhead,
Seas that are sapphire and calm;
Pink tufted grass on the rise,
Stirred by the wraith of a breeze—
This is a song of blue skies,
And the green glory of trees.

Do you remember a place, carpeted over with fern,
Windblown leaves cast at your feet, grey trunks
wherever you turn;
Moreton Bay ash on the right, guarding the gloom
of your glade,
Gold were the pools of the sun, black were the
islands of shade.
Only yourself and the girl—only her heart and your
love,
Only the fern underfoot, only the blue sweep above,
Silence of noon in the air, and the far pipe of a bird,
What you said, hurried and low, only the rustling
boughs heard;

You, the first man in the world—she, the first
woman God made;
Love is your birthright—your prize—hid in the
heart of the glade.

Dusk wraps the swamp coolibars,
Out on the reedy lagoon,
Grows the white reflex of stars,
And the gold disc of the moon;
There, where a bandicoot drinks,
Ripples grow wide from the bank,
Orange the homestead light blinks,
Under the brown ridge's flank.
Ah! All that was—and is not—
Will my heart never grow wise?
Just for a space I forgot
This was a song of blue skies.

THE TELEGRAM.

Across the desolation of waste and silent land,
Above a narrow bridle track grooved in the clog-
ging sand,
And into ridgy country, where stunted grass-trees
grow,
And by the shallow-bedded creeks, where muddy
waters flow,
It flies, to move the stoutest heart, to sorrow or for
weal,
The message of the written thought, along the
wires of steel.
In hottest night it speeds between the clearings in
the scrub,
Along the main road, where the lights are flaring in
the pub,
Over the scented timber flats, by Candle-nut in
bloom,
Where wallaby flit silently, grey shadows in the
gloom.

Or, climbing high the crested hill, it moves along
the line,
Where bush fires swept the grassy slope about
the blackened pine,
And where the bark-walled farmhouse lies, and
where the sorghum grows,
And where the wash-pool drafts out sheep as white
as mountain snows,

Until by plains of waving grass, and bush roads
hard and brown,
The message of the wired thought has reached the
humming town.
It clicks and clatters to the ears of an impatient
clerk,
It leaves upon the running tape the import of its
mark,
And once again the pregnant words, on paper
gathered down,
The message of the written thought goes out into
the town.

In uniform of blue and red, the youngster rides the
street,
By the smart car and shabby 'bus, he hurries sure
and fleet,
Till, where dark palms across the road their slender
shadows cast,
The message of the wired thought has found its
goal at last.
The hand that grasps it hesitates, the heart that
waited fears,
A moment—ere the die is flung for laughter or for
tears—
The loved one grasps at life again, and all the dread
is o'er,
The dear one who went far afield will touch our lip
no more—
So, each day, through the drowsy air, the word that
binds or parts
Is flashed across the wind-swept bush to heal or
break our hearts.

FEVER.

"A whirlwind o'er the sun-cracked plain blows, at
the tent flap tearing,
Why! Ellen's standing at the door, is that a shroud
she's wearing?
No! it's the white dress that she wore the night
we two were parted,
But she is smiling now at me, no longer broken
hearted!
She fades away—without a word of pity for my
pain, . . .
And the hot fever surges come and sweep along
my brain.
If I could reach some quiet spot. . . where never
sun is found,
A cool and silent earth lapped place, some six feet
under ground,
I would lie down and sleep at last, with only earth
about me,
With no red devils in my brain, and no white girl
to flout me! . . .
Why. . . is that water that I hear, a-ripple in
the willows?
I lie in my old bed at home, with fresh sweet linen
pillows . . .
And hear the heron near the dyke, go fishing in the
sedges,
While slow foot cattle come to drink along the
river edges!

There! there! a dream! oh! curse the change I find
when I've been dreaming!

Away, beyond the timber line, the cockatoos are
screaming,

The water-bag hangs by the door to catch what
breeze is going. . .

Good God! I'm in the Park at home . . . and
heavens! how it's snowing!

I thought I was stretched in a tent, a canvas bunk
my bed."

And so the broken pearls of thought run down a
ravelled thread,

"How white the snow, it hurts my eyes, and are
those church bells ringing?

I find the church door, enter in, and . . . that is
Ellen singing!

Demure she smiles across the pews . . . her
brown eyes on me turning,

I want her cold hands on my head, for they might
ease its burning. . .

What! back again, grey canvas walls? I thought
that I was dreaming,

The glimpse of gum trees thro' the door are far
too real for seeming.

The flies crawl up and down the pole, across the
earthen floor,

A line of straggling sugar-ants zig-zag towards the
door . . .

A red sun beats on tent and fly, the fever shapes
dance round,

I wish I had a cool dark spot, some six feet under-
ground!"

THE LONELY WOMAN.

Where the iron barks are hanging leaves disconsolate and pale,
Where the wild vines o'er the ranges their spilt cream of blossom trail,
By the door of the bark humpey, by the rotting bloodwood gates,
On the river bound selection, there a lonely woman waits.
Waits and watches gilded sunrise glow behind the mountain peak,
Hears the water hens' shrill piping, in the rushes by the creek,
And by sullen stormy sunsets, when the anxious cattle call,
Sees the everlasting gum trees closing round her like a wall.
With the hunger of her bosom notes the wild birds seek their mates,
All alone and heavy hearted, there the lonely woman waits.
Where the tall, brown city buildings, loom against a cloud-flecked sky,
Where along the curving tramlines brightly varnished cars rush by,
Where the call of petty traders echoes down the dusty street,

And forever comes the beating of the many passing
feet,
Where the bamboo reeds are whispering by the
green park's iron gates,
By the muslin curtained window, there a lonely
woman waits.

Where the white caps lash the sea-wall, and the
great waves thunder by,
Where the grey rains sweep the beaches under-
neath a sodden sky,
Where the swift winged gull flies landward, and
the fisher bides at home,
When the long Pacific reaches are a seething
stretch of foam,
Where the empty boat drifts seawards, by the
ocean's sand-flanked gates,
In the weather-boarded cottage, there a lonely
woman waits.

Where the river boats are calling, where the rail-
way engine shrieks,
Or where only wild bird liltings echo from the
reedy creeks,
Where the grey waves grieve to landward, and a
wet wind beats the seas,
Or where pearl-white moths flit slowly through the
dropping wattle trees,
By the high verandah pillars, by the rotting blood-
wood gates,
Crowded town or dreary seaboard, everywhere
some woman waits!

THE OTHER SIDE.

I am busy sorting the morning's post,
Jonathan puts down his cup to say,
"They're hanging a man at the jail to-day,"
And he helps himself to the buttered toast.

Thro' the lattice window there comes the call,
Of sparrows chirping along the rail,
A great Magnolia blossom pale,
Spreads its drowsy sweetness over all.

The grasses are long ^{where they were unshorn,} ~~on the patch of lawn,~~
Wild bees cling close to the hearts of flowers,
A promise of warmer noon tide hours,
On the scented breeze from the north is borne.

And the children laugh with no sound of strife,
As they pass to school on their loitering way,
And every pulse of the summer's day,
Is a throb with the lusty force of life.

A dimpled daring, mischievous elf,
One arm encircling his book and slate,
Makes a snatch at a rosebud through the gate
And the clock strikes eight on the mantel shelf.

With no mourning train, and no church bell's toll,
Where the prison walls rise rough and brown,
The other side of the sunlit town,
They are setting a-drift a human soul.

Now Jonathan pushes the window wide,
I pin in his coat a late blown rose,
And out of the shady room he goes,
To the amber glare of the world outside.

I cannot help thinking, the while I note,
The flowers that bloom and the birds that sing,
Of that horrible, quiv'ring human thing,
And the cowering soul on the winds afloat.

The tendrilled wealth of a vine astray,
To the clasp of the lattice frame is caught,
I wish I could banish that haunting thought,
"They're hanging a man at the jail to-day!"

FETTERED.

Elma chides because she says,
That my love has faded,
And her bodice heaves with sighs,
And she sadly pouts and cries,
Looks on me with tear dimmed eyes,
By long lashes shaded.

Thinks that if she threatens thus
I will grow the fonder,
Of the lips that call for kisses,
Arms that offer all the blisses,
(What a wealth of true love this is,
For a man to squander!)

Elma vows I am forsworn,
Fondling her no longer,
Sweetheart, if you only knew,
More than half your word's are true,
For I do not think of you,
Other loves are stronger.

But t'is not for other faces,
That my love grows colder,
I am false for far grey skies,
Where blue peaks of mountains rise,
And forget the girl who lies
Warm against my shoulder.

I forget her in the dreaming
Of a man's life only,
Where no woman hands are clinging,
And no syren voices singing,
Hoofs upon a hard road ringing,
And a bush track lonely!

Clear horizons dipped in morning,
Mists about the valley,
Strike the tent! and up! away!
In the warm, delicious day,
Men together strong and gay,
Tracking through the mallee.

There's the rival if you will,
Girl so full of scorning;
Not another woman's gaze,
Wandering in forbidden ways,
Just the dear lost boyish days,
Of my life's lost morning!

ON THE PIER.

Far out, where a path of silver leads over the tumbling sea,
In the sweep of the murm'ring waters, a fish leaps suddenly,
And the wind comes out of the distance, from the heart of the night,
And along the shore where the high road runs, there hovers a moving light.
A swinging lamp on the jetty, a moving light on the shore,
And sobbing against the red cliff the stir of the ocean's roar,
While over the boom of the surges, pathetic, and faint and thin,
There wails from the town the fretting of a grieving violin.

Black at the jetty entrance, where the white sand meets the seas,
Bulky sentinels of the shore loom up the cotton wood trees.
On the crest of the esplanade, the curve of the Lovers' Walk,
A flowering aloe leans far back, wind bent on its slender stalk.
A ragged line of iron barks, a Moreton fig tree high,
Shut out the houses of the town, and a patch of star-flecked sky,

And a lonely bunya spreads its arms, as though it
mourned to know,
That far off on the mist blue mountains, its sun-
dered brethren grow.

Wash of the whispering waters round the great sea
rotting piles,
Breezes wandering round us, that have followed the
salt wet miles,
The little mean thoughts have left us, the gossip and
strife and pain,
Of shut in cities, seems as though it never could
hurt again;
Not from the voice of the chapel, pent in by the
busy marts,
Does the message of Love eternal steal to our jaded
hearts;
Not in the heated churches, bending low on our
board-cramped knees,
But in the boom of the surges, and truths of the
wise old seas!

I REMEMBER.

I sit by the fire, for the nights are cold,
And the winter's hard when you're growing old,

Ah!.....I remember,

A creek that rippled the whole day long
And sang to the Dogwoods a mystic song,
The sparse leaved gum, with its flowering crest,
And the tunnelled banks where the sand tits nest,
And a wide warm stretch of sun-kissed sward,
Where pebbles glint in the shallow ford,

Ah!.....I remember,

What it was to be young, and glad, and strong,
By a creek that rippled the whole day long!

I heap more wood on the smouldering fire,
That burns like Age with its weak desire.

Ah!.....I remember,

The muster of cattle away Out Back,
The thunder of hoofs, and the stockwhip's crack,
The panting breaths on the warm sweet breeze,
The tossing horns by Rosella trees,
And the whirl of dust, and the hot hide's reek,
When that red bull cornered me by the creek!

Ah!.....I remember,

What a muscle I had for a stockwhip's crack,
In the rollicking mustering days Out Back!

The wind blows chill from the range to-day,
Blows chill from those blue peaks miles away.....

Ah!.....I remember,
The shiv'ring sheep in the deep wash pool,
The sunlight bleaching the scoured wool
(That was white and pure as a boy's first years),
And the ewes, just fresh from the ringer's shears,
Or patched here and there with the tar pot's shine,
Where some novice's blade had clipped too fine!

Ah!.....I remember,
The long, low shed, and the bales of wool,
And the huddled sheep by the wide wash pool!

Now I crouch by the fire, the days are cold,
And the nights are long, when you're growing old!

Ah!.....I remember,
How I reined my horse by the rough slip rail,
When a waning moon o'er the ridge rose pale,
And in the hush of the scrub's still gloom,
I saw the stars of clematis bloom;
While from the dusk of the lightwood tree,
Out of the shadows she came to me....

Ah!.....I remember,
And shall recall, till my senses fail,
How I held her close, by the rough slip-rail!

READY MADES.

All day she works at the sewing machine, in the
factory opposite,
Where the staring blindless windows gape in the
glow of the summer light,
And all day long comes the clang and whirr, from
the dusty, sun-flecked room,
Looking on to a narrow city lane, where the tall
black chimneys loom;
Her pale face bending above her work, thin hands
on the fabric laid,
From morning bell to the closing bell, she toils at
the "ready made."
A sparrow hopping athwart the sill, glances in at
the long bare room,
And it brings a breath from the city parks, where
the jacarandas bloom;
Up from the street, on the other side, comes the
lilt of a passing band,
But her eyes are fixed on the level seams that slide
from beneath her hand.
In the drag of the sultry days she works her tread-
mill from morn to night,
Behind the blindless window panes, in the factory
opposite.
And what does she think of? Sitting there, hour by
hour, in the beat and whirr,
Ah! What are the thoughts of happier days that
rise up and laugh with her?

She sees the line of the pale blue hills, and the
river like sheeted grass,
Hears the cattle tramp to the branding yards, all
over the tussac grass,
And she sees the hare bells about the plain, and
the windmill on the rise,
The long green sweep of the tasselled corn, that is
grateful to aching eyes;
She sees the sheep in the wool-shed pens, and the
myalls along the ridge,
And she hears the swish of the brown flood tides
race under the swinging bridge;
And she sees the gate by the ruined yard, where
young love and laughter met,
While the night wind scattered the honey sweets of
the unseen mignonette;
She sees the jasmine's petalled stars, and the buds
of the ti-tree flower,
And she rocks afloat in the cedar boat, for one still
delicious hour;
She sees the skies that are far and clear as the eyes
of a dreamer's dream,
All the while that her prodding needle pricks on
over the hard white seam;
And the thoughts of days that are dead for aye, rise
up and laugh with her,
As she works the treadle at "ready makes," in the
thunder and the whirr!

THE LAND OF THE SUN.

This is the land of the Sun! in the cool of green
seas God laid it;
He was glad when He planned its beauty, out of
His joy He made it;
Kind smiles for the wooded valleys, and the stir of
the park set towns,
And the plains where the warm wind ripples the
wheat on the black soil downs;
And an echo of joy for the mountains, fringed high
with the bunya pines,
And the hidden laugh of the gold reef, that lurks
in the shafted mines.
This is the land of the Sun! Where the buzzard
stalks thro' the grasses,
And the plover hide in the tussocks, when the
brown-faced drover passes.
Where the palest blue of the bluebell faints, under
a tropic sky,
And the desert pea burns scarlet, on the sand hills
hot and dry,
And far in the dark scrub thickets, at the back of
the squatter's run,
The cool green of the leafy roof tent is flecked by
the golden sun.

She was a child of the sun; it gave to her cheeks
their roses,

Dropped crimson about her lips, as the brush of a
god disposes;

And dappled her brow with its kisses, flashed lights
in her hazel eyes,

Such as made the angels' lanterns, in the Gardens of
Paradise.

Straight was her form and slender, and her hair
was a gilded glory,

Her life was a ray of sunshine, entwined with a
love god's story.

Was there time when I did not love her? Only be-
fore I knew her!

The very wild vines in the scrub were straining
their tendrils to her!

Was I more blind than the flowers? Was I dazzled
with too much sun?

Not I! We met in the drowsy noon, and loved ere
the day was done!

Did I tell her I loved her? Did her beauty silence
my tongue?

Both of us twain had eyes to speak, and, dear God,
we were both so young!

I tethered my horse to the rail, I found the path by
the ridges,

While sunset's roses in the sky, were wreathing the
frail cloud bridges;

And she, while the gloaming shadows fell low down
in the wooded west,

She fled like a shy sweet forest thing, to the shelter
of my breast!

She was a child of the sun—and her light went
out in the darkness,

Death stepped down from the hillside, where he
lurks in his bone white starkness;

He clutched at my garnered sunshine—he covered
its fire with mould,

To think that the fires of those eyes could ever
grow black and cold!

I fought for her life like a savage. . . I thought
that my arms were stronger,

I look at my hands with hate to-day. . . they
fend for her no longer!

And she was a child of the sun—and she lies for
aye in the shade. . . .

Lies where a tangle of hoyas climbs, and where
bower birds once played;

Lies where the river ripples low, as it slips to the
billabong,

And her eyes are blind to the sunlight—her ears
are deaf to the song.

This is the land of the Sun! Of lagoons where the
reed beds shiver,

Where at night the eyes of the stars see their
dazzling reflex quiver,

Where the grey-winged brolga treads the dance,
and the water-hen calls shrill,

And the springing mobs of kangaroos, feed down
by the wattled hill.

This is the land of the Sun! It was writ that they
should not sever,

Child of the sun in a sunny land, wrapped in its
clasp forever,

Death lapped her close in the sun-baked earth, God
set wild blooms above her,
The voice of the mighty island said, "She is mine
own; I love her."

Ah! Great is the power of Death! And this is the
land of the Sun,
It blazes on plain and timber, till the gold of the
day is done;
It scorches the wide grassed paddocks, and it flames
on the dusty track,
But warmth to her heart, light to her eyes, no might
of its fire brings back!

THE NATIVE-BORN.

I looked at him and I laughed. "What have you to offer," I said,—

"The moonlight-marvel of silver—or the glint of gold that is red,

The priceless dazzle of diamonds, silks of a delicate hue,

—Empty-hand and Lack-o'Land—is it thus that you go to woo?"

The brown of his eyes was dauntless; the tan of his cheek paled not,

"Love has grown grave in the Castle that smiled in the reed-thatched cot,

And you say I have naught to offer, I, who am Native-Born,

Heir to silver of countless stars, and the rustless gold of morn;

I, who have watched from the mountain, the hosts of the Lord grow dim,

And seen day flush o'er the rivers where the monster saurians swim;

I, who have dusted the pollen of wattle sweets from my arm,

And drunk the milk of the cocoanut I wrenched from the swaying palm;

I, who rippled the crystal creek in joy of the morning dip,

Brushed the honey of native bees away from my bearded lip;

I, who have couched on the close green turf, walled
in by the blackbutt trees,

Trod a carpet of cotton-grass that swept to my dew-
damp knees;

I, who have gathered diamonds that lurk in the
buttercup,

Snatched a 'pearl from a daisy's heart, where wan-
d'ring brown moths sup;

I, who ride by the bridle track, with no man to
say me 'nay,'

To the rim of the mist-blue world, at shut of a
burning day;

I, who can dream in the moss-hung scrub, sing to
the tall bethars,

Gaze my fill at the Southern Cross, built high in
an arch of stars!

I was born on the black-soil Downs, and rocked by
the Southern breeze,

The kingdom I have to offer is wide to Pacific seas!
And the big grey spider hanging from a branch of
the swinging pine,

Spins silk that were finest decking for a true sweet-
heart of mine!

Let her take my hand and follow! The road to
the Northward runs.

She shall have silver of moonlight—gold of Aus-
tralian suns!

Was it Lack-o'-Land ye would call me? I, who am
Native-Born,

Have heard the twittering parrakeets in stalks of
the greening corn;

Have plucked the buds from the lucerne; pulled
grapes from the laden vine,

Empty-of-hand and Lack-o'-Land! Why, the whole
wide earth is mine!"

I looked at him and I laughed. "But a maid asks
more than this!

You think the key to magic doors is hid in a bridal
kiss!

Trees would be only trees to her—she would crave
a carven roof,

The clashing of a city band for beat of the chest-
nut's hoof."

The fire in his eyes died not; the smile on his mouth
lurked yet.

"Oh! Greybeard, in a heart grown cold, it is easy
to forget!

Man calls, a woman follows (an' she love him) by
ridge and dell,

To the creak of the saddle leather—the lilt of a
horse's bell.

An' she care not the lighter does the
chestnut hack go forth,

For plains of the purple vinca, the green of the sea-
washed North.

But Life of Life! An' she love me our
skies will be always blue,

And then I have much to offer, Greybeard, as I
go to woo!"

I saw him cross the ranges, from shadow into the
shine,

And back came his gay voice floating: "The whole
of the world is mine!"

THE WASTED DAY.

I have wasted a day!
In the gleam and the glint of bauhinia trees,
I have sat very still with a book on my knees,
While a flicker of leaves chased the sun o'er the
page,
I have felt like a bird, just escaped from the cage.
I have revelled in silence, or whisper of wind,
Till the cobwebs were swept from each nook in my
mind,
And the lives and the souls of the things of the
wild,
Are as real to me now—as when I was a child!

I have wasted a day!
There was dew on the grass as I climbed by the
rise,
It was hiding the gold of the buttercups' eyes;
And dew-sodden, the spider web drooped from
the bough,
Tho' it swings taut and fine in the sun's splendour
now;
And the little roan calf, by the billabong's bank,
Stared his wonder at me, past his mother's broad
flank;
And, where the wide flats by the tide were left
free,
A fish-hawk swept scarlet of wings to the sea!

I have wasted a day!

But the hills were veiled lightly in gossamer cloud,
And I knew where the waterfall, clamouring loud,
Spills squander of diamonds by wet rock and fern,
And the vales that are dimpled, and cliffs that are
stern;

And I knew where, by bracken and stiff crested
palm,

By the steel-girded bridge, and the semaphore's
arm,

Through the jar of the cutting, across the hill's
breast,

The black engine beat out, on its way to the west.

I have wasted a day!

I have dipped in my book; read a page here and
there;

Then watched the hawk hang, level-winged, in the
air.

I have re-read a portion, thought over a phrase,
Too happy to censure—too idle to praise;

I have seen a moth glimmer in eddying flight,
While I wondered at men, and the books that they
write,

Deciding how tedious the printed page looks,
Since Nature has written such marvellous books!

I have wasted a day!

For at noon came the boom of the in-washing tide,
I could see the pale silver, encroaching and wide;
I could hear the salt breeze flutter grass-spear and
leaf,

And I knew that, far out, on the edge of the reef,

Where the brown seaweeds cling, and the green
waters comb,
All the long coral ridges were sheeted with foam,
That creams round the spars and the spoil of
the wreck,
Where the cobra-worm bores in the drift of the
deck.

I have wasted a day!
At night the wind dropped in aisles tree flanked
and green,
And along the blue heavens and amethyst sheen
Streaked the paling impress of the path of the sun,
And the tall peaks grew purple, then faded to dun;
And where crimson cloud-wisps watched the golden
day die,
On a sudden the colour was filched from the sky,
And the mourners came up from the bier of the
day—
Strange, shadowy figures, in habits of grey!

I have wasted a day!
But I laughed my defiance aloud to a star
Hanging high in the place where the hopes of men
are;
And when crickets a-chirp to the ^{crescent} ~~rising~~ moon sang
(A slim silver thing, like a god's boomerang),
I swept careless feet o'er the grass-matted soil,
As I cried "Fellow men! Are ye wise in your toil?
For I have found treasure ye cannot assay—
Look deep in my heart—Have I wasted my day?"

THE LOCKED DOOR.

You are my friend—your hand is on the door
That shuts out other love forevermore!

Did you not once, just when my eyes held yours,
Give me a glimpse of unforgotten shores?
Seas warm and still, of lapis lazuli,
Of sunspears flashing thro' a brilliant sky—
And strange pale petalled blooms that held a scent
To drug to ecstasies of great content.

You are my friend—your hand has turned the key
Of the Great Gate of Love That Must Not Be!

Yet once—the gate you bar so close swung wide,
I saw the gloaming aisles that lie inside,
Heard the strange rustling of the Tree Of Fate,
Whose tasselled boughs tap on that iron gate;
And all the voices that have ever sung
Their love in that soft universal tongue;
And all the sighs of hearts that cast the die,
Reckless repeating, "Naught—but you and I,"
Ev'ry low love-croon, each cry of sorrow
From souls whose day has not a to-morrow—
And thro' it all the harp that makes men mad,
Kept thrumming, "This—and this—you might have
had!"

You are my friend—this path you offer me,
'Twixt box-hedges, many a trim-kept tree;
Bare, open glades, and grassy lawns set wide,
To a long sweep of beach and lapping tide,
Where many walk, and, as we pass, we greet
The same grave shadow in all eyes we meet.—
Straight, open—grey—the road runs to the end—
This is the way you mark for me, oh! Friend!
The Open Road—unsheltered—storm or shine—
Never love-lips for me, nor hand on mine!

Did Nature, when she tossed her shuttlecock,
Shaping my life, evolve it but to mock?
What has her tricking, wanton, fancy proved?
I wanted so to love, and to be loved!
The river that is pent within my heart,
Along whose banks the buds of passion start;
Whose force, thro' silent nights, has grown and
grown,
Would sweep between its banks for you alone!
There is no channel for the river now,
No ears to listen if I plead or vow—
Oh, hidden garden, and, oh, dreamful sea,
And stretch of level road you offer me!

You are my friend—but I remember yet—
Scent of wild rose and drowsing violet,—
Glades where the secret harp goes murmuring,
And fine green leaves from earth to heaven swing.

So dear, farewell,—For I go evermore,
Rememb'ring what lies hid behind the door!

PEACE AND WAR.

An old world garden, full of tangled sweets,
And drowsy with its heavy perfumed air,
Green boughs o'er hanging moss grown garden
seats,

Tall hollyhocks—and roses everywhere!

A white moth hovers o'er a pansy bed,
Pale lilies nod upon their slender stalks;
Beyond, the flame tree flaunts its flag of red,
And silence broods along the empty walks.

Now a soft breeze across the pleasance comes,
The jacaranda blossoms drift and fall....
And hark! From out the East a roll of drums,
And from the West an answ'ring bugle call!

THE OUTLAW.

In the watches of the night I hear his hoof beats
pass,
Clear upon the flinty road, and muffled on the
grass,
I twist the silken coverlet, I turn upon my bed,
While he is riding nightly with a price upon his
head!

A year ago last Michaelmas, as I came slowly home,
Where in the shadow of the lane the wanton fire-
flies roam,
And a great harvest moon at full, was red behind
the trees,
I heard the saddle leather creak beneath his close
pressed knees.

I scarce knew how it happened, for we did not
pause or speak,
He caught me to the saddle bow, and kissed me on
the cheek.
Upon the summit of the hill, the cruel chains are
swung,
And there, this Spring, a cut-purse, and an outlawed
noble hung;

I know he, too, will ride someday, his last ride on
the hill,
And I shall never speak one word, tho' silent grief
may kill.
My father toasts King George's health, and damns
his enemies,
And I pray for an outlaw's life, upon my bended
knees!

The young bloods boast if they caress my haughty
finger tips,
And yet—my cheek has pressed so close 'gainst
those forbidden lips,
If they knew that—how they would jest, and sneer
across the wine,
And vow the favours of their queans were no more
free than mine!

If they but knew! But they do not—and so I mince
and smile,
And scorn them as I scorn myself, a mummer all
the while!
The only time that I am free, with mask and smile
put by,
Is when I hear those hoof beats ring beneath a
star-gemmed sky.

Ah! me! To think I lie so soft, secure within my
bed,
While he rides by—an outlaw—with a price upon
his head!

AN OLD WOMAN.

I see her pass
In a faded skirt that once was bright,
In a dingy blouse that once was white,
And the wealth of hair
That women envied, and men called fair,
 Poor locks, alas!
They still keep a hint of their youthful gold,
Screwed back from the face so worn and old,
They crinkle still in the same crisp way,
As when lover's fingers were wont to play
Tenderly with their golden gleam.
And I wish that I still could hope and dream
 As I see her pass.

I see her pass
In her battered hat and her shabby shoes—
What man ever thinks as he pleads and woos—
Of the after wreck?
He sees the curve of the warm white neck,
 But no magic glass
Shows him the face with its beauty gone,
The naked soul that must stand alone,
Robbed of the fire of love and youth,
Just a wan grey mask of decay and truth;
No glamour of folly, or gloss of lies,
Can speak of beauty to those poor eyes,
 As I see her pass.

As I see her pass
I grieve for the things that the years must see,
For lost ideals and reality;
For the thin grey hair
That women envied and men called fair.

Poor locks, alas!
You were praised so much for your glorious sheen,
A crown for the head of a very Queen.
Men brought gay flowers and jewels to deck
That firm white bosom, that soft white neck—
Ah! fret of moth, and ah! rust of gold—
I turn away from a tale re-told,
As I see her pass.

THE GIRL IN YELLOW.

The girl in yellow on the stage,
Smiles, twists, and turns, and pirouettes,
I wonder if she sees me here,
And thinks, "How quickly he forgets!"
For I, who sit by Marcia's side,
Must smile as she does act a part;
I, who long since, have held so close
The girl in yellow to my heart.

On her white brow a wreath is set,
And down her arms a garland falls,
'Twere wiser if I turned my gaze
To jewelled Marcia in the stalls.
Oh! Marcia, in my book of life,
What know you of the hidden page?
I wish I could forget her eyes,
The girl in yellow on the stage.

The music hurries, faster yet,
And then a sudden breathless pause;
I wonder if they heard me groan,
Amid the thunder of applause.
The curtain falls, and Marcia speaks,
"This piece," she says, "is all the rage!"
I bow my head. I only saw
A girl in yellow on the stage.

THE DEAD SLAVE.

"I will be glad—bring me the festal cloak,
The beaten chain—and thrust pale Sorrow by!
There are a hundred maids more fair in Rome,
Strangle lean Grief, and bid full Pleasure come,
I will be glad—bring me the festal cloak,
And—(Mighty Slayer! She was young to die!)

I will be glad—so bind the sandal straight,
Not pearls—but jewels all opposed to tears,
And priceless perfumes, dropping spicy-sweet,
That make me think of dancing naked feet—
The lonely lion seeks another mate,
Her grave is deep—(And yet, I feel she hears—)

I want that black browed girl to bring the bowl,
The girl whose lips are like pomegranite flow'rs,
Her amber flesh would make a god forget,
Life is too brief to weep and waste and fret;
The pulsing bosom—never mind the soul!
Kisses for me (for her the long cold hours—).

Oh, little body nestled on my heart,
Oh, purchased slave, who yet was all my Queen,
The purity my passions could not slay,
The silent, clasping night, the dreaming day.
Oh! Death! draw out your arrows from her heart,
And give me back the love that once has been!"

PEGGY'S EYES.

Would you see the ^{Lochs} ~~lakes~~ of Scotland, the braw
^{Lochs} lakes of Scotland,
 Deep and blue and wonderful as drowned blue
 skies,
 Where heather-footed mountains smile?
 Then come with me and gaze awhile
 In Peggy's eyes.

And would you see the kind heart, the fond heart,
 and the leal heart;
 Where betwixt dark lashes the captured sunshine
 lies,
 Where roses riot in her face?
 Then come with me and gaze a space
 In Peggy's eyes.

CHAPERONES.

With chilly feet and aching eyes, sitting against
the wall,
Watching the budding beauties pass in triumph
thro' the ball,
Watching the swirl of silken skirts, hearing the
music moan,
Thinking of days when never feet were lighter than
our own;
Thinking of eyes that looked in ours, eager for
smile or word;
Thinking of tones of easy praise—half of a life un-
heard!
All the little a woman loves—all that she finds so
much—
All the gossamer joys of youth—fled at the lean
years' touch.
Grey-haired women, with wrinkled cheeks, have we
forgotten all,
Do you think that we never dream—sitting against
the wall?

Spectacled and over stout, heavy-cheeked, or thin
and worn,
We are the twilight colourless; they are the rose-
red morn;
Twilight muffles the reckless leap of quiv'ring
young-old hearts,

As with drawn lips and mein severe, we play our
thankless parts!
We have our scars—they throb and burn just as
they used to do,
At the stir of a silken skirt—brush of a satin shoe.
Oh! sobbing music—that laughs for them, oh! wind
in the oaks outside,
We have been winsome maid and wife, and we
have been shrinking bride;
Death's is the one dance undanced, for us, who
have footed all,
The last quadrille for veterans, sitting against the
wall!

Peering thro' the painted net, and ivory of a fan,
The dim old eyes are clear once more, and the lips
desired of man,
In the hush of velvet nights, 'neath the coronal of
stars,
We hear the breeze go whimpering out by the black
belars—
We are so old—so long unloved—shall we grow
never wise,
As we droop our heads, remembering the magic of
those skies?—
And then back to the lighted room, the sweet, last
waltz begins,
The 'cello, with a waking sob, throbs thro' the
violins.
To us it sings—as young love sang—a tender,
deathless croon,
To the swing of swishing skirts, and the tap of
pointed shoon!

Oh, dimpled maids, who play to-night, your merry
mad-cap parts,
You, too, some day, with reckless leap of quiv'ring
young-old hearts,
With wearied and remembering eyes, will sit
against the wall,
And watch the budding beauties pass in triumph
thro' the ball!



THE SAGE.

We talked of science in a lighted room,
While outside there was rain and wind and gloom,
You spoke of fluent tongue with many things,
Showed me the earnestness which learning brings,
Modest, and yet excelling everywhere,
While I mused, "Have soft fingers through his hair
Ever passed lovingly, and in their play
Trembled a little on that hint of grey?"
Great was my privilege, in gracious mood,
You saw in me a mind that understood.
Only a mind! The rest was but a part;
A sort of make weight! Body, hands, and heart!
Favored, was I, indeed! And welcome there
While you spoke on, to be the listener,
We talked of science in a lighted room,
While outside there was wind and rain and gloom.
You talked, I listened, wondering the while,
Had some rare woman ever made you smile,
Forgetting wisdom for a little space,
To be just a fond man and kiss her face!

THE LIGHTED ROOM.

Do you know the joy of a lighted room, with a
laughing face to greet you?

The pleasant word, the tender look, and the open
arms to meet you?

When the firelight flickers on the blind, and the
outside world is hid,

You've a casket full of secret sweets, and you've
but to raise the lid.

For there the cosy rose of love blooms with un-
fading bloom,

Lucky indeed is he who goes home to a lighted
room.

Do you know the grief of an empty room, where
ghosts of dead love are lying,

When the winds steal through the open door, with
the sobs of the great world's sighing?

The blackened grate, and the undrawn blind, and
the cheerless walls about you,

With never a woman's voice to say, "Oh! the day
was long without you!"

Ah! sad is he, with no beacon light, in a night of
starless gloom,

Who, with slow step and a tired heart, goes home
to an empty room!

THE CIRCUS LION.

The spoil of cunning human hands,
The tawny lion lies,
Dreaming, perchance, of desert sands,
And far-off Lybian skies.

He sees the tombs of kings rise dark,
The moonlight on the plain,
While a pale, narrow-shouldered clerk,
Makes comments on his mane.

He rises, snarling at the hands,
That point their feeble fun,
And longs upon the midnight sands,
To see the red blood run.

He beats the rough boards with his tail,
His great jaws gnash their rage,
But what can royal strength avail,
Against a bar-set cage?

His muscles strain, his eyes grow dark,
He crouches for a spring. . . .
Secure, the flaccid, weakling clerk,
Laughs at the Captive King!

THE NEW FENCE.

They are pulling down the old brown fence; they
started work to-day,
There's going to be a brand new fence built up
across the way.
Rough hands are tearing down the wealth of
twisted eglantine,
And scattering the roses' hearts—as torn and
bruised as mine.
The old brown fence was sunken, and it sagged out
here and there,
But all about its rotting posts grew clumps of
maidenhair;
A curtain of green creepers hung across it to the
road—
No wonder that the old fence bowed itself beneath
the load.

And now the garden lies outspread, like some poor
heart laid bare,
For vulgar hands to pick and pry, and vulgar eyes
to stare;
And here it was, on one fair night, that crowns my
memory,
She leaned her white arms on the fence, and looked
across at me;
And I read laughter on her lip, and question in her
eye;
I leapt across to answer her, the fence was not too
high.

But when they build the new white fence, conventional and prim,
It will be no meet resting place for arms so fair and slim;
Alone she will watch roses bud, and violets droop and die.
I shall be in the dusty road. The fence will be too high.



A STILL NIGHT.

Here lurk the shadows of the windless street,
Here is a wide set window lamplight red,
Here comes the drag of slow unhurried feet,
By railed-in gardens where the breeze is dead,
Where dusty buds unfurl the flag of Spring,
Burns a pale gas-flame straight, unflickering.

The leaf that has survived to be the mock
..Of baby green (the pledge of summer's love),
Drops, where at dawn the chirping sparrows flock
To gossip in the thick banana grove;
But even that, so close the spell is laid,
Scarce any rustle in its downfall made.

A sweep of sky with white unwavering stars,
A chequered street, half shadow and half light,
And where the red lamp throws its slanting bars,
Across the still enchantment of the night,
Like haunting pixie music, sweet and thin,
There steals the tinkle of a mandolin.

THE PANTHEIST.

Through painted windows here and there, the summer sun steals in,
And, as I kneel in prayer, I hear that I was born in sin,
Here lies a regal purple patch, here spills a splash of red,
There wavering prisms softly catch the preacher's ill-thatched head.
And, over all the droning voice, which bids us look for pain,
The chirping sparrows cry, "Rejoice! for Spring is here again!"

Outside the parks are putting on an over dress of green;
The sloping hills their grandeur don, gem set with flowers between;
The sap is rising in the trees, the seedling in the sod,
And, though upon my knees, I cry, "This God is not my God!"
For mine is not a God of Wrath; He lives in bush and tree;
He bids the snow-white May break forth, to cheer and comfort me.
He reaches down a helping hand: He says, "Look round—and live!"
Enough, a man to understand; enough, God to forgive!

A great and lofty church is this, the vault is arched
o'erhead;
The reading desk and eagle is with shining wings
outspread;
And from the Holy Book there falls a ribbon
worked with gold,
White tablets gleam along the walls, black lettered,
chaste and cold!
When I shall die no marble square shall mark the
wall for me,
My body shall make blossoms fair, and help the
growing tree.
Where somewhere on the earth I lie, shall spring
up jasmine bowers,
And the free soul, which once was I, shall riot in
the flowers!

CREEKS OUT WEST.

The creeks in Western Queensland are, to all appearances, nothing but dry sand beds; but under the sand, available by sinking a shaft a foot or two, good water is to be found. Even in the time of the great drought the supply in many of these creeks neither failed nor diminished. The foliage of the gum trees along the banks is noticeably fuller and greener than that of their fellows further back in the paddocks, but there is nothing on the surface of the sand-wastes to show to the inexperienced eye the water flowing underneath.

Far underneath the heat-white sand the hidden
waters lie,
When, in the spring, the gum boughs wave their
blossoms to the sky;
Below the path of wand'ring ants, below the cattle
track,
Slip the cool green of silent tides along the creeks
Out Back.
The hot winds crackle in the grass, the drought-
breath burns the weeds,
No clear blue waves go lapping to the rhythm of
the reeds,
But striking through the heavy sand a water-gain-
ing quest,
The bushman fills his billy from the hidden stream
Out West.
At dawn beside the water-course the magpie trills
his song,

The brown snake stirs the grasses that the stock
left dry and long,
The slow guana waddles from his carrion-feast at
noon,
And 'possums play in iron-barks beneath a pale
gold moon,
And through the dusk towards the camp the lank
brown drover rides,
And wonders at the secrets of those slipping, voice-
less tides,
The beef-wood scatters creamy blooms along the
singing breeze,
The heavy cattle chew the cud between the brig-low
trees,
And when the stars like shattered gems flash all
about the sky,
Far underneath the dew-damp sand the hidden
waters lie.

ESTELLE.

"And diamonds," said the lover; then Estelle saw
 them glimmer,
And a robe of heavy satin beneath their star-white
 shimmer,
With the little blue lights flickering, as the ice-sheen
 on the hill,
Where the sharp peaks rise to Heaven, and the
 snow packs, soft and still.

"Rare diamonds," said the lover; she saw them in
 dark tresses,
Sparkling on fair, idle fingers, like to fairy-frost on
 dresses,
Heaped tiaras, curving necklets, bands on wrists
 too slender for them,
Regal stones on Queenly bosoms, rainbow-flashing,
 Estelle saw them.

But her slippered foot ceased tapping on the light-
 reflecting floor,
And her long dark eyes grew dreamy—was it gems
 that Estelle saw?

There is a spot to Southward, where granite ranges
 slumber,
Grey fern-footed tors and daisies, bee-orchids with-
 out number,

Shaded gullies, where the moss lies, and the mountain runlets tinkle,
And the sodden logs sink blackly where the gushing waters sprinkle,
There's a place ringed in by gum trees, where the sun breaks thro' at noon,
Where eyeless fish in hidden holes hear hidden waters croon,
Where only, in the drowsy hours, the creak of boughs is heard,
And seldom comes an answering note to challenge of a bird . . .
There is a scent of growing things by scattered rock and tor,
Perhaps the dream in Estelle's eyes sought haven there once more. . .

"And much travel," said the lover. Then Estelle saw the ocean,
And the white deck of a steamer, the blue, the light and motion;
And the high waves lifting, lifting, and the islands decked with green,
The crumbling ancient buildings set, the straight stemmed palms between,
Saw the hill-bound pathways rising, the temples and the flowers,
And the sand-flats of the desert, and the full, enriching hours,
"And great cities," said the lover; Estelle saw the humming town,
And the thirst for wider knowledge deepened in her eyes of brown.

Then close her ivory fingers clasped on her round,
woman-knee,
The eager light died in her eyes—what else did
Estelle see?

There's a grassy plain to Westward, where the
wire fences spread,
A heat-wave dancing to the sky, a blue glare over-
head;
A dry creek bed that waits the flood, and a ramb-
ling throng of trees,
A honey crown of Bloodwood flow'r, the thick dull
hum of bees;
A dusty lane, a station roof, by a lane where
shadows creep,
And far away, the long complaint from mobs of
travelling sheep;
A willow dipping to a pool, where white feathered
Ibis drink,
Spurs dragging on the pebbled walk—Oh! Estelle
must not think!
A cedar branch across the lawn, sun-ripened berries
drops . . .
Upon a seat, leaf blurred by shade, then Estelle's
memory stops,
It seems so many lives away, lost, centuries before,
And yet the youth in Estelle's soul is yearning there
once more. . .

"Love shall be ours," the lover said, "such as never
yet you knew."

And Estelle saw a loyal heart, a faith untried and
true;

A sheltered home, an ingle nook, far from all by-gone pain,
Perhaps a little baby face to bring her peace again—
Always a fending arm for her, thro' unknown days to be,
A manly breast for her brown head—What else did Estelle see?

Lost moons that wane o'er long lagoons—red stars
in cloud-torn skies,
And a fine scorn of woman's love, fixed in a dead
man's eyes!



THE HONEY MOON.

A lattice, creeper twined, that opens wide and high;
One ragged wind-blown palm against an opal sky.
Beyond a line of white—the sand; a gleam of blue
—the sea;
With shifting undertow of weed the waves make
melody.
Now flames the West to sunset's pomp, now pales
the vault above,
Now droop the lids o'er wearied eyes that have
grown wise in love.
Daylight has faded from the shore like Youth that
flies too soon—
But o'er the silver water-way rises the Honey Moon.

ROADS THAT I REMEMBER.

Ah! The roads that I remember!

One was just a line of wheel tracks curving o'er a
black soil plain,

Hard and dusty in the dry time, soft and sticky
after rain,

Tussock grass beside it growing; wild weeds spring-
ing from the sod,

Winding to the hazy sky line, and the slate blue
hills and God!

Deep ruts, shiny from the friction of the jolting
spring cart wheels,

Faint impressions of the passing of a horse's un-
shod heels;

Or impatient deeper hoof marks stamped in by the
homestead rail,

Where the pack horse paused a little to unload the
cockies' mail.

Ah! The roads that I remember!

One led through a deep still scrubland; bottle trees,
green crested, high,

Pale, full foliaged lightwoods growing—brigalows
blotting out the sky.

Wild grapes struggling o'er the leaf mould; Emu
berries orange-red,

Emerald moss about the tree roots—grey moss
swinging overhead;

Long, cool shadows, ground raked over by the
quick scrub turkey's feet,
Swaying creepers, scarlet fungi, climbing jasmine,
starry, sweet,
Where the tawny dingo patters, or the scrubbers
toss and stamp,
And where it is always gloaming by the timber-
getter's camp.

Ah! The roads that I remember!
One led through the grey gums downward to a gap
among the hills,
Where the flood rains marked the ranges with a
hundred tumbling rills,
Where the long reeds rustled softly, by the steep
banked billabong,
And a solemn kookaburra chattered out its laughing
song;
Where, above their roots strong cabled, swam the
lilies faintly blue,
And from glades of shrub and oat grass peeped an
old man kangaroo;
Where the ridge was scarred and tortured by the
searchers after lode,
On by hill, and swamp, and valley, ran the dear old
station road!

Ah! The roads that I remember!
One led from the scattered township, bare and hard,
rutted and brown,
Slim and ghostly ring-barked timber marked the
stock route to the town;
Here the mobs of cattle hurried, when the water
holes were low,

And with four grey sweating horses came the coach
of Cobb and Co.;
Here the ringers, after shearing, cantered in beneath
the stars,
With a cheque or two to squander at the noisy town-
ship bars;
Here the bride and laughing bridegroom passed out
with their merry train,
Here the dead were slowly carried back to Mother
Earth again.

Ah! The roads that I remember!
One was just a faint line shadowed on a lonely
grassy rise,
Where a glimpse of blue sea tumbling lured the
seeker's tired eyes,
Black rocks, and a dreary mudbank, where the tide-
wet mangroves grow,
But to me the best remembered of the roads I used
to know!
Where the murmur of the rollers, breaking on the
sandy bar,
Mingles with the sudden crying of a curlew from
afar;
Where round the spotted cowrie shells the sodden
seaweeds twine,
There Love forgot the peering world, and laid a
hand on mine!

THE POSTER GIRL.

She hangs o'er the railway station, 'neath the haze
of city skies,

A poster girl, with spreading skirts, and strange,
haunted, human eyes,

(Red and yellow the colours crude, that clash in
her tasteless dress),

Watching the slow "All Stations" down, and the
whirl of the North Express;

All day long, 'tis her penance set for some bygone,
easy sin,

To watch the Down train rattling out, or the Up
train hissing in,

The city clerks and shop girls trim, the merchant or
demi-monde,

Tramp and saunter, or flutter by, and mount to the
steps beyond;

But thro' the night, when stars blink forth, and the
swaying lanterns swirl,

She shivers on the wooden wall, the wraith of a
poster girl!

About the stations on the line there are posters
green and blue,

Simp'ring faces of poster girls—but never a girl
like you!

The man who painted limned you not from a quick
inventive brain,

Yours was a face burned on his heart by the red-
hot lance of pain,

You were one whom he used to know full well in
the seasons gone,
Where lilies brush on blue lagoons the plumes of a
sable swan;
Where in the dust of the blackbutt trees, many soft
winged moths flit by,
And knit to grooves in warm brown earth, the mats
of the mosses lie,
Ah—was it hate that drew those eyes—was it love
that loved too much?
Learning that chin by gaze intent—those lips by too
close a touch?
Or, rememb'ring when gum boughs swayed to
drone of a lazy breeze,
How suns threw on the sanded path—a pattern of
splash work trees;
Did he, taking a hated task, for a meagre livelihood,
Recalling breaths of wattle-bloom, or of scattered
sandalwood,
(Knowing that Spring greened all the bush, and
hearing the lost Springs moan),
Paint the look he had taught to grow, in eyes that
he once had known?

She hangs o'er the railway platform, 'neath haze of
the city skies,
A poster girl with spreading skirts, and strange,
haunted, human eyes;
Yellow and red the draperies clash, that fashion her
gaudy dress,
Watching the slow "All Stations" down, or the rush
of the North Express,

All day long. 'Tis the penance set for her's—or
another's—sin,
To watch the Down trains sliding out, or the Up
trains hissing in.

About the stations on the line there are posters old
and new,
Simp'ring faces of poster girls—but never a girl like
you!



MOON-TRYST.

A kiss on your brow;
For the hours that life has given to us—dreamful
and happy—reckless or gay—
And one on your cheek for this moment snatched
from the prim closed fingers of Everyday!
And one on the white of your perfect throat—
The moon to-night is a radiant boat,
That out into a sea of stars sets sail,
Thro' cloud, like a maid's communion veil—
To-night when I link my fingers so—
Just a little more—and your life shall go
In a last breath out of your parted lips—
But I pause—I loosen my finger tips
To answer the laugh that hangs in your eyes,
Defiant mockery—so woman-wise!

A kiss on your mouth!
For days that are bright as golden discs, new-
minted coinage a King might spend,
And for nights that are fine as rounded pearls, from
moon-white circle to clasped end!

THE CALL OF THE NORTH.

A creaking crane and a swinging weight, the moist,
hot dark about us,
And the laugh of a girl from the prow, with mirth
that seems to flout us;
And over there, where the crouching rock, lion like,
leans o'er the town,
The reds and greens of the signal light, from the
slender spar look down;
And here and there on the sleeping deck lies a
gleaming shaft of white,
Here and there the long soft shadow creeps on the
pathway of the light,
Where the mighty engines wake and stir, hid under
the polished wood,
The shadows cover your drooping head, just as
though they understood.
A whistle cuts thro' the wide black night, as the
train slides o'er the rail,
The last train out from the sleeping town, with its
midnight load of mail;
And overhead, in one swift red spark, a meteor
spurns the sky,
And a voice that seems a spirit thing, trails faint in
a last "Good-bye!"
A slack chain swings, and a rope drags past, and
the pulsing engines beat,
The shore bell jangles above the thud and the rush
of naked feet,

And fair and far in the oily wash of the tide that
draws us forth,
One white crest lifts in the sheeted gloom of that
deep curved bay up North.

I have left behind the jetty wharf, and the hulls of
the waiting ships,
My hand still warm from another's hand, my lips
from another's lips;
And Magnetic Island, on the left, seems a menace
in the night,
While dwindle aft, o'er the churning waves, the
gems of the Signal light.
I have left behind the long brown beach, with its
haunting tropic charm,
The Chapel hidden among the trees, and the ragged
groves of palm;
I have left behind the red-streaked rock, and the
still pandanus glade,
The mango trees o'er the paling fence, with their
great unbroken shade;
The tamarinds in the garden plot, and the cannias
on the rise,
The bougainvillae's regal-red, and the millk white
orchids' eyes.
To the citted South have set my face, as the rocking
boat speeds forth,
And yet the cry in my soul to-day, is a cry for the
green-isled North!

THE CORNER SHOP.

That is the little house where Death slipped in last
night,
A sordid, corner shop, with one step grooved and
white,
Where, from its high front window, tall, fly-specked
lollie jars,
Stare at the street, and catch a glint of colour
from the cars.
The blue-eyed doll in pink and green, the lucky
packets gay;
The sticky squares of chewing gum that melt along
the tray;
A Christmas stocking, bright with sweets, behind its
stiffened net,
The small surroundings of a life one thinks Death
might forget!
One feels he might have let it be—gone higher up
the street—
Where green slats temper dust and glare, and pride
and riches meet.

To-day, beside the footpath, that fronts the little
shop,
I heard the rattling pauper's cart, and saw the horses
stop;
I saw the plain deal coffin, that held the perished
clay,
And heard a woman sobbing her very heart
away. . . .

A flock of noisy sparrows, food searching, in the
road,
Flew, chirping, from the beating hoofs that bore the
silent load;
I heard a heavy dragging step move o'er the sunken
floor,
And through the mutter of the town, the closing of
a door.
The window blinks out on the street, as it blinked
yesterday,
But now an awful peace lies on the house across
the way;
A silence, that is all of God, broods on the door-step
white,
About the little sordid shop, where Death slipped in
last night.



THE OUTPOST.

A line of hills, a sudden spurt of flame,
A crackling volley, and from whence it came
A stirring—as of leaves upon the tree,
When pale September buds drift silently.
The sky is blue and smiling overhead,
Above a tumbled heap of brown and red;
And thro' the yellow stems of long, dry grass,
A startled train of searching black ants pass.
They do not fear, so quietly he lies,
They climb above the sightless staring eyes;
Across the lips a woman loved of yore.
This is the Red God's harvest—this is war!

FINALE.

We were not friends in the long ago,

Let us be honest and give the truth,
You liked me not, and I liked you not,
And the blood of youth is quick and hot,
Ay! The dear, warm blood of youth!

But, now for the sake of the old feud,
With palsied hand and uncertain eye,
Draw on the glove that we used to fling,
Strip off the armour of plate and ring,
Lay the rusted rapier by!

Draw your lean knees to my leaping fire,
Here, side by side, let us nod and sup,
I will mix a brew—spicy and fine,
But fear no measure of poisoned wine,
From out of the loving cup!

Do you remember how white she was?
And the blue of the veins on her neck;
The breast kissed close by a ruddy curl,
The soft, slim shape of an unwed girl . . .
The shame of the after-wreck?

Good lack! To have lived to tire of her!
To see her grow grey, and gaunt and thin,
To hear her sweet voice ring peevishly,
To see her eyes look their fear of me,
From the mask of her faded skin!

Long have I buried the thoughts of love,
The toothless lion will seek no mate . . .
The back grows bent, the fires grow cold,
But, odds life! I must, indeed, be old,
When I can no longer hate!

NO RECORD.

“There is no record of this period of his life.” From a
Biography.

Mountains, lifting rosy foreheads to the greeting of
the sun,
Pine-edged paths, and mists in valleys, when the
brief, bright day is done;
Shepherds, yod’ling by the ice-clefts, and, where
red-tiled hamlets lie,
Star-like windows nightly wond’ring at their rivals
in the sky.

Deserts, white to vague horizons; buried cities in
the sand,
Tawny-bodied lions slinking thro’ a waste of moon-
lit land;
One green palm, against a gateway, crumbling into
bygone things,
And the busy lizards sporting o’er the resting-place
of kings.

Tropic forests where the vines swing, olive-spans
from tree to tree,
Where the wind in creaking branches mocks the
murmur of the sea;
Where the pale-faced orchids cluster, and the tulip-
bud pricks red,
And a honey-comb of leafwork shuts the blue out
overhead.

Grassy plains that break in daisies, when the
autumn rain is o'er;
Buttercups, like golden buttons, sewn along the
earth's brown floor;
Blue smoke, trailing by the ridges, where the moth-
grey tents are set,
When the ranges down the river change from dun
to violet.

Birch canoes above the rapids, green and tangled,
silent ways—
Did the dead man keep, I wonder, any annals of
those days?
Did he ever smile in secret, he who seemed to court
the day,
Thinking of a twilit corner, more than half a
world away?

Did one other share his wand'ring, by vast moun-
tain, sea, or plain,
Sepulchre the perfect mem'ries, in a picture-haunted
brain?

Amber beads, loose-strung together, do they lie
those yellow noons,
Covered in some heart's still corner, by the discs of
faded moons?

Perhaps his grave mind, undetected, housed some
lurking woodland elf,
Hugging his imp-soul for keeping one whole twelve-
month to himself.

How the light is focussed on it—every leaf of life—
save one—

That in cool, green shadow slumbers, while the rest
are scorched by sun!

DUSK.

It is growing dark; by the blurred belar,
There climbs and climbs ever a white-faced star,
Like the dwindled soul of some long dead moon,
Whose reflex once laughed in the low lagoon.

It is growing dark; o'er the open plain
Fades the last spilled red of the sunset's stain,
And where Night low crouched, on the ranges
springs,

Comes the sudden rushing of unseen wings.

It is growing dark, where the brown boat drifts
Thro' the drooping greens of the willow rifts,
Winding mists steal up from the couch of Day,
Where the red and gold have alike turned grey.

It is growing dark; at the branding yard,
Where the moist black soil is hoof-beaten hard,
And the bark-stripped gums stand up stiff and tall,
Comes the organ-note of the cattle call.

It is growing dark; in the station home,
Where the yucca blooms are like scattered foam,
And the trees bend low to the fondling night,
There strikes o'er the grasses a shaft of light.

It is growing dark; we must turn the boat
Shoreward now, where the lilac lilies float,
And we must not pause at the landing place,
The heart sees too much when night hides the face!

It is growing dark; and 'twere best to go
Back to prudent ways, and the lamplight's glow,
Lest, while blushing Day to Night's dusk arms slips
Warm lips in the dark should find warmer lips!

It is growing dark; lift the dripping oar,
A long, rippling sweep—and we make the shore;
A brief hand clasp—then your dress gleams white
On the curving path, as we say "Good night!"



BOY-DREAMS.

I was a Pirate once,
A blustering fellow with scarlet sash,
A ready cutlass and language rash,
From a ship with a rum-filled water-tank,
I made the enemy walk the plank;
I marooned a man on an island bare,
And seized his wife by her long, dark hair;
Took treasure, such heaps of it!—wealth untold—
Bright bars of silver and chunks of gold!
Till my ship was choked to the decks with pelf,
And no one dare touch it except myself!
And my black flag waved to the tearing breeze,
And I was the terror of all the seas!

I was a Fairy once.
I swung in the boughs of the Silky Oak,
And the harebells rang to the words I spoke,
And my wings were fashioned of silver-gauze,
And I knew no grief and no human laws.
And I lived where the laces of green leaves sway,
And my life was one long, long holiday.
No tasks to learn, and no bothering rules,
No hectoring Grown-ups, and no—more—schools.
But a dance each eve, 'neath the moon's cold light,

To sit up as late as I liked at night . . .
For a lance I carried a grass-blade green,
And my shield was cut from an olivine;
I sipped cool dews from the cups of flowers,
My days were threaded of happy hours!

I was a Merman once.
In the gloom of the amber-tinted seas,
With the brown tang clinging about my knees,
With a coral house, and a crab to ride,
Who pranced and who ambled from side to side,
I wooed a Mermaid with emerald hair,
Dragged the fierce sea-serpent from out his lair,
With his flaming tongue and his awful might,
And I slew him—easy—in open fight!
I had strings of pearls—white as frozen milk;
That were strung for me on sea-spider's silk;
And I never pined for the upper skies,
Whose blue came down in the dead men's eyes,
Drowned men with the salt on their blackened lips,
Who slid, drifting in, from the wrecks of ships.
But I took the gold from the belts of all,
To pave the road to my coral hall.

I was a Hunter once.
And I trapped and stalked in a pathless wood,
And the talk of the Wild Things understood.
With my leather leggings and hat of brown,
I tracked the elk and the redskin down;
Slew a grizzly bear in a mountain cave,
And tweaked the nose of an Indian Brave,
Ere I shot the rapids in birch canoe—
For there was nothing I could not do.
There was naught I did not dare nor enjoy,
In the magic world of a dreaming boy!

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